27th July, 1954.

## Your Ref: AM15/207510.

Dear Sir,

## Re: St. Thomas a Becket's Well, Otford.

I thank you for your letter dated the 14th July, 1954, and have now been shown the copies of your letters to Lt.Col. G.W.Meates and Mr.Paton, and must say that I am rather at a loss to understand why you should have written to these two gentlemen without communicating with me.

The trenchee behind the walls of the tank were in fact excavated at Col.Meates suggestion and had nothing to do with the collapse of masonry, as is proved by the fact that I wrote in 1936 to the Local Planning Authority drawing attention to the condition of the north wall of the tank and expressed my opinion then that the collapse was imminent.

I am of course aware that the repair of a building is the responsibility of the owner whether scheduled or not, but as this particular building is of no conceivable use to me I do not propose to repair it; I would remark further that any work which has been done to this structure during the past years has been promptly destroyed by the public, hence the necessity for enclosing the area with iron railings. On the other hand I think it a pity if an Ancient Monument of this description should be allowed to disappear and I am prepared to spend such money on its repair as the Inspector of Taxes will deduct from the amount paid by me in taxation; I cannot afford to pay taxation at its present level and at the same time repair an Ancient Monument for the benefit of posterity.

Will you be good enough to let me know, therefore, whether it is possible for the Minister to arrange with the Taxation authorities that money may be deducted from my Income Tax payments for this purpose.

Yours faithfully,

D. McCallion, Esq., Ministry of Works, Lambeth Bridge House, London, S.E.1. LAMBETH BRIDGE HOUSE, LONDON, S.E.1.

Reliance 7611/Ext..... Telegrams: Travaux Wire London

Your Reference:
Our Reference:

10th August, 1954.

Dear Sir.

### St. Thomas a'Becket's Well, Otford

Thank you very much for your letter of the 27th July about the above ancient monument.

Unfortunately it is not possible for the cost of repairs to Ancient Monuments to be deducted from Income Tax, as this would be tantamount to increasing the amount of public funds spent on Ancient Monuments. These funds, at the present time are very restricted and barely sufficient for all the repair work we should wish to do to those monuments in our care. Therefore I regret that in these circumstances we are unable to help financially towards the cost of repairs to St. Thomas A'Becket's Well.

Yours faithfully,

L. V. JOSEPH.

E. D. McDowall, Esq., M.I.Struct. E., The Castle House, OTFORD,

Kent.

LAMBETH BRIDGE HOUSE, LONDON, S.E.I

Reliance 7611/Ext.

Telegrams: Travaux London Telex

Your Reference:

Our Reference: AM. 207510

20th July, 1960.

Dear Sir,

It has been suggested to the Minister that it would be of assistance to owners or occupiers of scheduled ancient monuments or of property which included scheduled monuments if the Ministry were to send periodical reminders that such ancient monuments had been listed under the Ancient Monuments Acts.

The object of listing a monument in this way is to try to ensure that it is not altered or destroyed. The Ancient Monuments Acts provide that a monument which has been listed must not be demolished or removed, or altered or added to, except in case of urgent necessity, without giving the Minister of Works three months' notice. It has happened that listed monuments have been damaged or destroyed because, as a result of changes of ownership or occupation, or for other reasons, these obligations have been overlooked.

I am, therefore, sending you this letter to remind you that the following monument has been included under the Ancient Monuments Acts in the published list of ancient monuments whose preservation is of national importance:

No. 137 - Otford, St. Thomas a Beckets Well (as shown outlined in red on the enclosed map) which it is understood is owned and occupied by you.

E. D. McDowall, Esq.,
The Castle House,
Otford,
Kent.

/The

The listing is registered in the Register of Land Charges of the Local Authority.

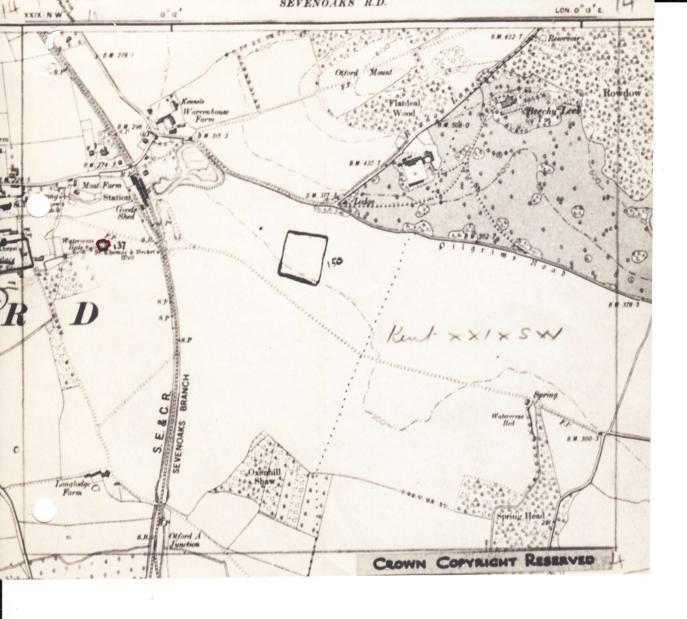
If there is any further information or advice which we can give, please let me know. The Minister asks me to say how much he appreciates the care which owners and occupiers generally take to ensure that ancient monuments are protected, often at considerable inconvenience to themselves.

Yours faithfully,

D. M. PRYOR

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# ANCIENT MONUMENTS SOCIETY

Founded in 1924 for the Study and Conservation of Ancient Monuments, Historic Buildings, and Fine old Craftsmanship

12. EDWARDES SQUARE, LONDON, W.8
Tel: WEStern 1414

12th February 1965

Dear der. Me Dowall,

I believe that you are the owner of the well generally known as Becket's well, which stands on land adjacent to the garden of your house, and I understand that repairs are now needed to it. I hesitate to inquire into the matter as it is your private property, but you will understand that any ancient monument is bound to be of national interest, and if I am correctly informed that you are a member of the Kent Archaeological Society I am sure you will not resent our If repairs are needed we should naturally in this Society like to see them carried out so that this interesting antiquity, which I know from Archaeologia Cantiana, vol. LXX, 1956, shall be preserved for posterity. Possibly you are prepared to carry out repairs yourself, but if there is any difficulty about it there is the possibility of obtaining grants from the Ministry of Public Building and Works, the County Council and the District Council. Any grant is likely to be conditional on at least limited public access being given once the well has been put in order, and I do not think the number of visitors would be so great that this is likely to be an onerous condition. I shall be grateful if you could tell me what your thoughts are on this matter, and if you would like to investigate the possibilities of a grant, subject to this condition, we shall be quite willing in this Society to give what help we could in securing it. I hope you will take this letter in the spirit in which it is written, accepting that my only object is to secure the preservation of this famous well.

your sureel, Iva Bulenes - Thomas

E.D. McDowall, Esq.

President: The Rt. Hon. THE EARL OF ROSSE, M.B.E., M.A., LL.D., M.R.I.A., F.S.A.

Chairman: RAYMOND RICHARDS, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist,S.

Hon. Secretary: The Rev. W. E. CLARKE, L.Th., F.S.A.

Asst. Secretary: HENRY CORNWALL-LEGH.

Hon, Treasurer: L. M. ANGUS-BUTTERWORTH, M.A.,
M.I.Mech.E., F.R.G.S., F.S.A. Scot.

Secretary: IVOR BULMER-THOMAS

26th rebruary, 1965.

Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, Esq., Secretary, Ancient Monuments Society, 12, Edwardes Square, London, W.8.

Dear Mr. Bulmer-Thomas,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 12th February 1965, and you are correct in assuming that I am the Owner of Becket's Well.

I observe you have read the Article about this well in Archaeologia Cantiana, vol. LXX, 1956, so you will know that at that time considerable excavation and investigation was carried out with the object of trying to decide when the Well was constructed. At this time, and previously, the public had free access with the result that so much damage was done that I completely enclosed the Well with a high, unclimbable railing.

I have at various times approached the District Council and the Ministry with a view to carrying out repairs but have received no satisfactory replies and, as you state, any Grant from the Ministry would be conditional on public access being gained, and to this I would never agree because experience has shown that public access only results in wanton damage.

Before the War I did offer to carry out the necessary repairs if the amount spent would be allowed as a charge against Income Tax but even this was refused. Now, the cost of repairs would be financially prohibitive. The fact is that, unless some philanthropist can be found who is willing to spend a few thousand pounds on repairing this structure, it will eventually disintegrate which I agree is a great pity.

Yours sincerely,

## ANCIENT MONUMENTS SOCIETY

Founded in 1924 for the Study and Conservation of Ancient Monuments, Historic Buildings, and Fine old Craftsmanship

> 12, EDWARDES SQUARE, LONDON, W.8 Tel: WEStern 1414

> > 23rd April 1965

Dear Mr. Mc Dowall.

Your letter of 26th February about Becket's Well did not require an immediate reply from me and owing to much travelling about I have hitherto delayed an answer, but I am grateful for the helpful information you give me.

As the well is private property it would not be possible for any of the charitable organizations to make a grant for the repair, as it is not charitable in the legal sense to help a man to maintain his private property. It is unlikely that some philanthropist would come forward willing to spend money on the repair of someone else's property. I am fairly confident, however, that the Ministry could be persuaded to make a grant subject to the work being done to their satisfaction and subject to a right of public access. This is the point, I gather, at which previous negotiations have stuck. I am very conscious of the widespread vandalism to-day which is a national problem of serious dimensions. I am confident, however, that although the Ministry must insist on public access being given if public money is to be spent on the repair of private property, this need not be an unlimited access; it might be confined to a few hours a week, or it could be laid down that visitors would have to obtain a key. These can all be matters of negotiation and there are many precedents throughout the country for limited access being given. I shall be quite willing to negotiate with the Ministry on this basis if you would like me to do so.

Jour Buleves . Thouse

E.D. McDowall, Esq., The Castle House, Otford, Kent

President: The Rt. Hon. THE EARL OF ROSSE, M.B.E., M.A., LL.D., M.R.I.A., F.S.A.,

Chairman: RAYMOND RICHARDS, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.Hist.S. Hon. Secretary: The Rev. W. E. CLARKE, L.Th., F.S.A.

Director: Professor Sir ALBERT RICHARDSON, K.C.V.O., P.P.R.A., M.A., F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.

Hon. Treasurer: L. M. ANGUS-BUTTERWORTH, M.A.,

Asst. Secretary: HENRY CORNWALL-LEGH.

M.I.Mech.E., F.R.G.S., F.S.A. Scot.

Secretary: IVOR BULMER-THOMAS



LAMBETH BRIDGE HOUSE, LONDON, S.E.1.

Reliance 7611/Ext..... Telegrams: Travaux Wire London

Your Reference:

Our Reference: AM15/207510

14" July, 1954.

Dear Sir,

## St. Thomas A' Becket's Well, Otford

Thank you for your letter of 6th July. Sonce you wrote last March an Inspector of Ancient Monuments and an Architect visited the site and, as a result of what they learnt from Mrs McDowall, have been in touch with the Chairman of the Otford and District Historical Society concerning the excavation and the collapse of masonry.

It was finally arranged that the Chairman would convey to you our recommendations, which are that the walls should be carefully treated and waterproofed and that the masonry which has collapsed should be rebuilt under expert supervision.

I would explain that the inclusion of the monument in the list published under the Ancient Monuments Acts in no way affects responsibility for its maintenance, which remains with you as the owner. We are, however, empowered to give whatever assistance we can in the way of providing reports on its condition, and methods of treatment. In this case we would be pleased to arrange for supervision of the recommended work making a charge only for the out of pocket expenses incurred by our representative, and I shall be interested to learn whether you will undertake the work on this basis.

Yours faithfully,

E. D. McDowall, Esq., M.I.Struct.E.,
The Castle House,
OTFORD,
Kent.

D. MCCALLTON

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ENOS Sevenoaks Rural District Council.

JOHN MUDD,

CLERK.

TEL. Nº SEVENOAKS 2291 (3 LINES).

YOUR REF.

OUR REF. 28/6

Inglewood, Oak Hill Road, (NEAR TUBS HILL RAILWAY STATION) Sevenoaks, Kent.

21st September, 1951

Dear Sir,

re St. Thomas a' Becket's Well, Otford.

I am directed to refer to previous correspondence herein, and to forward for your information six copies of further Notes submitted to this Council by the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments.

Yours faithfully,

Clerk to the courcil

The Castle House, Otford.

# Sevenoaks Rural District Council.

JOHN MUDD,

TEL. Nº SEVENOAKS 2291 (3 LINES).

Inglewood, Oak Hill Road, (REAR TUBS HILL RAILWAY STATION) Sevenoaks, Kent.

YOUR REF

OUR REF. 28/5.

3rd August, 1951.

Dear Sir,

re St. Thomas a Becket's Well, Otford.

Thank you for your letter of the 2nd August, 1951, the context of which I will report to the appropriate Committee at their next meeting.

Yours faithfully,

clerk to the council.

E.D. McDowall, Esq.,
The Castle House,
OTFORD,
Nr. Sevenoaks.

#### MINISTRY OF WORKS

Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings

LAMBETH BRIDGE HOUSE.

LONDON, S.E.1.

28th April, 1954.

Dear Colonel Meates,

I have recently visited St. Thomas a Becket's Well at Otford as there has been a collapse of masonry in a side wall of the tank. This collapse is partly due to the rather ruthless clearing, which I gather has been carried out under the auspices of the Otford Preservation Society. I don't know whether you have any influence with that body, but could you possible get them to refrain from digging trenches just behind the stone walls of the tank. I feel that if their activities are allowed to continue, the whole building will soon become a heap of debris. If you happen to have the name and address of their Secretary, could you let me know, as we should like to write to him asking him to desist and fill in his trenches, which have apparently been open for a year.

Yours sincerly,

(Sd.) R.S.Simms.

It.Col. G.W.Meates, F.S.A., Great Hallanden Farmhouse, Underriver, Sevenoaks, Kent.